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NEWS

U. S. SENATOR FOR KANSAS

FROM:

SENATE REPUBLICAN LEADER

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## AIDS & HEALTH WORKERS

### DOLE BIPARTISAN AMENDMENT IMPLEMENTS CDC GUIDELINES

LAST WEEK, MY DISTINGUISHED COLLEAGUE FROM NORTH CAROLINA, SENATOR HELMS, LAID BEFORE THE SENATE AN AMENDMENT RELATED TO DISCLOSURE BY HEALTH PROFESSIONALS, IF THEY PERFORM CERTAIN PROCEDURES AND ARE H.I.V. POSITIVE. SENATOR HELMS ASKED US TO CONFRONT A VERY DIFFICULT ISSUE THAT MANY OF OUR CONSTITUENTS ARE CONCERNED ABOUT.

RECENT PRESS STORIES ABOUT TRANSMISSION OF THE H.I.V. VIRUS BY HEALTH PROFESSIONALS HAD LED TO A GREAT DEAL OF FEAR ON THE PART OF MANY -- SOME OF WHICH IS JUSTIFIED, SOME OF WHICH IS NOT. IT IS OUR HOPE THAT THIS CONSENSUS AMENDMENT, WHICH IS BASED ON MUCH OF THE WORK DONE BY SENATOR HELMS, HELPS TO RELIEVE SOME OF THAT FEAR.

THE CENTER FOR DISEASE CONTROL HAS BEEN WORKING FOR A LONG PERIOD OF TIME TO DEVELOP RECOMMENDATIONS BASED ON THE LATEST SCIENTIFIC INFORMATION. AS WE ALL KNOW ONLY TOO WELL, THERE IS FAR MORE UNKNOWN THAN KNOWN ABOUT THIS DREADED DISEASE, ALTHOUGH OUR KNOWLEDGE IS GROWING. IT WAS THEIR GOAL AND OURS TO GUIDE AND PROTECT OUR CITIZENS WITHOUT FRIGHTENING THEM NEEDLESSLY, NOR CREATING AN UNREALISTIC EXPECTATION OF SAFETY. I BELIEVE THE GUIDELINES DO JUST THAT, AND IT IS FOR THAT REASON THAT WE BASE OUR AMENDMENT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THOSE RECOMMENDATIONS.

THERE IS CLEARLY A RISK, THOUGH SMALL, OF TRANSMISSION BETWEEN A HEALTH CARE WORKER AND A PATIENT. THE RECOMMENDATIONS PROVIDE THAT EVERY EFFORT BE MADE TO IDENTIFY THOSE PROCEDURES CREATING THE GREATEST RISK AND DIRECT THAT THEY EITHER NOT BE DONE BY THOSE WHO ARE INFECTED, OR BE DONE UNDER LIMITED CIRCUMSTANCES WITH THE PATIENT'S FULL KNOWLEDGE. IF A HEALTH PROFESSIONAL FAILS TO FOLLOW THESE SENSIBLE GUIDELINES THERE IS NO DOUBT IN MY MIND THAT THEY SHOULD BE DISCIPLINED BY THE STATE LICENSING AGENCY. THESE AGENCIES ARE ACCUSTOMED TO DEALING WITH SUCH MATTERS.

HAVING REACHED CONSENSUS ON THIS MATTER WHICH IS DESIGNED TO HELP PROTECT PATIENTS, WE MUST NOW TURN OUR ATTENTION TO PROTECTION OF OUR HEALTH CARE WORKERS. THE UNIVERSAL PRECAUTIONS CALLED FOR BY CDC ARE DESIGNED TO PROVIDE PROTECTION FOR ALL AND SHOULD BE THE BASIS UPON WHICH OUR EFFORTS ARE BUILT.

OVER THE NEXT FEW DAYS, THIS SENATOR WILL BE WORKING WITH HIS COLLEAGUES AND THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR TO SEE IF WE CAN'T BRING TO CLOSURE THE CONSIDERATION OF REGULATIONS DEALING WITH WORKPLACE PROTECTIONS. AGAIN, OUR GOAL SHOULD BE TO PROTECT NOT ONLY THOSE WHO ARE CARED FOR, BUT ALSO THOSE WHO PROVIDE THE CARING.

AGAIN, MY THANKS FOR THE EXTRAORDINARY EFFORTS OF SENATORS HELMS, HATCH, MITCHELL AND KENNEDY TO REACH A CONSENSUS ON THIS IMPORTANT ISSUE.

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